



Astonishing Revival of Prosecuting Activity That Emphasizes the Old Question, "What Is a Witch?"



Curious Design from an Old Book Showing
a Witch and Her Machinery of Divination.



Three Witches Pictured as
Riding a Pig.



Medieval Illustration of a Witch
"Riding Forth."

HAVE the wheels of progress turned backward? Is there a return of the conditions that once resulted in the putting of women to death for practicing witchcraft? The police of Newark, N. J., are accused of indicating that they think so by arresting the Rev. Sarah Darling, arraigning and holding her in jail for trial as a witch.

The Rev. Mrs. Darling's arrest on this charge is not only an extraordinary event in itself, but what is said to be still much more remarkable is the acknowledgment of the Newark police that for a year and more they have seriously been conducting a "war on witches." For this purpose, according to report, a squad of "wizard police" was organized, for the astute minds of the guardians of Newark's citizens realized that it takes a wizard to catch a witch. However that may be, the Rev. Mrs. Darling, who says that she is a regularly ordained minister of a Spiritualist church, grimly realizes that it is "up to her" to prove in court that she does not commune with evil spirits, ride a broomstick and wear a bell-crowned hat.

"The Rev. Mrs. Darling is a witch within the meaning of the statute," declares Michael Long, chief of the Newark police. "The information she gives out at her circles breaks up homes. One man complained to us that his wife had become a raving maniac as a result of the things the Rev. Mrs. Darling told her. It was only after many complaints that we arrested her. Newark has made up its mind to put an end to witchcraft."

"Last year," continued Chief Long, "forty-five arrests were made in Newark for witchcraft. This year we are going to run in everybody whose name appears on our list of suspects."

In addition to New Jersey, practically every other state has laws against fortune tellers, witches, wizards and the like. Prosecution is usually based on the ground that these persons are possessed of no supernatural powers whatsoever, but that they are simply plain frauds who prey upon the superstitious fears of their patrons whose money they take without giving any real service. Persons who believe in the honest and entirely scientific plausibility of fortune telling have particularly protested against prosecutions.

The belief in witches is one of the oldest in the world. Sorcerers practiced their art in the days of ancient Babylonia and Egypt. In the famous code of Hammurabi, who lived 2000 B. C.,



The Famous Painting by Hazlitt Showing
a Woman "Oracle" Participating in a
Sacrificial Rite in Ancient Gaul.

being a contemporary of Abraham, is this law: "If a man has laid a charge of witchcraft upon a man and has not justified it, he upon whom the witchcraft is laid shall plunge into the holy river, and if the holy river overcome him, he who accused him shall take to himself his house." In the Bible there are several prohibitions of witches, the most famous of which is that in Exodus xxii, 18: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The sorcerer is also condemned in the New Testament, as may be seen by Acts viii, 9, and xiii, 6, and other passages.

The earliest record of a witch being burned to death is dated 1275, the witch confessing that she fed her offspring the flesh of babes. At Toulouse, in 1335, sixty-three persons were accused of being witches, eight of whom were burned and the others imprisoned for life. In 1324 Petronilla de Meida was burned at Kilkenny, Ireland, by orders of the Bishop of Ossory. Some 75 years later there were wholesale witch prosecutions at Berne, Switzerland.

In the United States one of the most famous recorded trials for witchcraft was that of Grace Sherwood of Princess Anne county, Virginia, who in July, 1706, was "put into water above man's depth to try how she swims." According to Connecticut laws, adopted in 1642, "any one that be a witch or consulteth with a familiar spirit shall be put to death." In Massachusetts, Winthrop's Journal (1648) records that "Margaret Jones of Charlestown was found guilty of witchcraft and hanged."

The
Meeting
with the
Witches
as
Shown
in
Shakespeare's
Play,
"Macbeth."

Witches as Pictured in Ancient Prints.



Witches as Named in an Ancient Book.



The Witch Goes Forth.

A
Witch
Flight.

